

1763

A N

O D E

O N

MARTIAL VIRTUE,

To which are prefixed

OBSERVATIONS on TASTE,

A N D

Ligonier (J.)
K

The Present State of POETRY in *England*.

Neque, te ut miretur Turba, labores,
Contentus paucis Lectoribus.

HOR.



L O N D O N:

Printed for M. COOPER, in *Pater-noster-Row*. M DCC L.

(Price SIX-PENCE)

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ON
MARTIAL VIRTUE,

To which are prefixed

OBSERVATIONS on TASTE

AND

The Present State of Poetry in England

Neque, se ut miretur Turba, labores

Hor.

Consequens paucis Iactantibus.



L O N D O N :

Printed for M. Coopers, in Paternoster-Row. M DCC LXXV.

(Price Six-pence)

A Continuation of the DISCOURSE before the ODE on BEAUTY.

WHOEVER will philosophically examine into the Connection between good *Taste* and good *Manners* will find that the first is necessary to the early Promotion, and Preservation afterwards, of the other. There is such an Affinity between *Wisdom*, *Wit*, and *Virtue*, that, where the first are not in some Degree, we have very little Reason to expect the last. The Universe, and all therein, are Objects for the Exercise of *Wisdom* and *Wit*; and he who would be wise must first consider what are the proper Subjects of his Examination; and, when he has fixed on them, his next Concern is to see Things as they are; for, thro the Want of that necessary Power, Kings often misbecome their Thrones, Ministers of State involve Nations in Miseries and Disgrace, Ministers of the Gospel bewilder themselves and the People, Rhymers mistake themselves for Poets, presumptuous Pedants and rash Censurers themselves for Critics, and *Ribaldry*, in her various Shapes of *Folly*, is miscalled *Wit*. *Wit* is an Emanation of *Wisdom*: it is *Wisdom* in her gayest Dress, and is frequently the great Promoter of *Virtue* by wisely exposing *Vice* with spritely Strokes of Fancy and Expression. A late popular Writer says that *WIT* and *JUDGEMENT* often are at *Strife*; which, besides the Inelegance of the Diction, convinces me that he had imperfect Ideas of both. There have been Princes, I wish I could say in *England*, who have seen the Beauties of *Wit*, and who have entertained her at Court; and there have been Statesmen who have had so perfect a Judgement of Writings of Elegance and *Wit*, and so true a Sense of their Value to a Community, that they have cherished rising Worth as soon as it was discovered to them: we have had our *Somers*, our *Hallifax*, and *Cowper*, who promoted *Wit*, because they knew the Advantage of it to the Public; but to Kings, Ministers of State, and to all other Men, who have no *Taste* of *Wit*, the sportive Goddess is as offensive as the Sunbeams are to an Owl. When Men in Power have a true Relish for *Beauty*, they who are possessed of *Wisdom* and *Wit* meet with Encouragement to exert them for the Benefit of Society: they are then Commodities with which a Man is sure to make his Way to Fortune, or at least to a Condition of Life that will place him above the ordinary Degrees of Men: but if *Dulness* should usurp the Seat of *Wisdom*, and fill the Chair of Authority,

Authority, with an Insensibility of those Arts which sweeten and adorn Life and which promote Morality, *Wisdom* and *Wit* would have no Recommendation, they could make no Claim which would be understood: all that they could say to the Idols of Power would be as unintelligible as if they spoke *Greek* to one entirely ignorant of Letters: a Man of *Wisdom* and *Wit*, especially one possessed of the rich Talents of Poetry, would act as fruitless a Part in shewing his best Gifts to such Persons as the ablest Musician would by performing the most masterly Composition of *Handel* to an Ass browsing on Thistles. Men of Saturnine Dispositions, of Capacities not formed for the Reception of elegant Ideas, never make the Connection between *Wisdom*, *Wit*, and *Virtue*, the Subject of their Consideration: that has no more to do with the Exercise of their Faculties than the Charms of the *Grecian* VENUS have with those of a Man born blind: such Persons are few Removes from Brutes; they are the lowest of rational Beings; and the Motions of their Mind are but little above what in Beasts is called Instinct. The Beaver guards, by a Sort of Building, from the Inclemency of the Weather, and from the Danger of being overflowed by the Stream near which he fixes his Habitation: the Bee and the Ant lay up a Winter's Store: what more do the Wretches of such blunted Understandings as I have been speaking of? They know that Money will purchase all the common Necessaries of Life; Money therefore is the sole Object of their Consideration; and for that they become devoted to Toil and Trouble; for that they break their Slumbers and their Promises; for that they refrain from all reasonable Pleasure, and every Act of Benevolence; for that they neglect all social Communication, and the Duties of Humanity; for that they are indefatigable and oppressive: in short, that alone engrosses their Minds, and absorbs their little Souls, while Men with good natural Endowments, a liberal Education, and a long Habit of thinking on the choicest Subjects, contract a just Relish of Beauty, and become familiarly acquainted with the noblest and finest Spirits antient and modern, *Homer*, *Plato*, *Xenophon*, *Aristotle*, *Cicero*, *Virgil*, *Milton*, *Shafesbury*, and the few other who have been greater Ornaments and Benefactors to the World than the Conquerors and Princes of it; and, from this Familiarity with the most beautiful Objects of Contemplation, they look on all Deformity with Contempt and Abhorrence; and on this Taste of *Beauty* they form their Manners. Some Men are so unhappily molded as to be incapable of giving Admittance to the brightest

Authority Images.

Images. The Works of the most elevated Genius delight and cherish like the Sun; and, as the midday Sun in *June* is too dazzling for weak Eyes, so are the Writings of such to weak Minds. There are Persons who may be said to haunt the Groves of the Muses and the Fields of Fancy, without a finished Judgement or a perfect Taste: these poetical Wanderers are insensible of the Language which is peculiar to the Province of Poetry, and are therefore humbly contented with the Production of a trifling Song, Farce, or any Matter of Fact in Verse: such Writers as these have never Ideas sufficient to distinguish rightly; they are therefore generally Pests to a Society, by propagating unmanly Trifles, or offensive Ribaldry, thro the muddy Channel of bad Poetry: and such were most of the Poets (as they are miscalled) dramatic and other of the licentious Reign of King *Charles the second*.

As the Promotion of good Taste in poetical Compositions is the Promotion likewise of good Manners, Nothing can more nearly concern a State than the Encouragement of good Writers. If no theatrical Entertainments were exhibited but such as are offered by Men of Genius, the Multitude would find an Advantage in them by the Improvement of their Minds, by the Enlargement of their Ideas: but we cannot expect our Theatres to be the Schools of Virtue and Politeness, unless Men preside over them who are Judges of what ought there to be exhibited to the Public: the Want of such Managers has of late Years been an Inducement to some Men to scribble, who might otherwise have been useful Members of Society in some Branches of Trade or necessary Labour: to such tasteless and ignorant Managers we are indebted for the Revival of such dramatic Pieces as would, without their officious Aid, have sunk into that Oblivion which they deserve: but I entertain some Hopes from that commendable Spirit which lately shewed itself, in an *English* Audience, on an Attempt to revive one of *Otway's* detestable Comedies.* If a virtuous and polite Generation is worthy the Care of a Legislature, these Considerations deserve the Attention of Men in Power; for, without the Example of what the World generally calls the *Great, Wit* and *Wisdom* cannot easily become fashionable; but when Men of Birth, Fortune, and Power, think the Cultivation of the Virtues and noble Endowments of the Mind worthy their serious Thoughts and earnest Endeavours, their Dependents

* The Subject of theatrical Entertainments will be resumed before the next Ode.

are spirited to an Imitation of them: the Soil is then manured; and the healthful Scyons are grafted on a generous Stock. I hope that I am not too late in the Day to begin to work; for should the Sun, the bright Luminary of Knowledge, which once enlightened and cheered the Land, go down, in vain we may talk to a dark and leaden Age of *Wisdom, Wit, or Virtue*: we may, with as much Propriety, read Lectures to the blind on Colours, or address the divinest Airs to the deaf.

In the Absence of genuine *Wit* a spurious Issue often takes Place, and shews itself in loose and double Meanings, and in diverse Shapes of licentious Ribaldry, which come under no Denomination of *Wit* or *Humour*, tho' called by both by the stupid Admirers and Idiot-laughers: such Sallies of *Impudence* and *Folly* are, compared with *Wit* and *Humour*, as the vaporous Exhalations which we see falling in the Night are to the Stars: the first drop, never more seen or enquired after; and the other shine with a lasting and undiminished Lustre.

Poetry is more efficacious towards making Men virtuous than the dry and unadorned Precepts of *Philosophy*: her Ways are strewn with Flowers, which are fruitful of Delight: by her the Fancy is allured into a Sense of *Beauty*; and the *Mind*, possessed of divine poetical Graces, is wrought into an Abhorrence of all Deformity. As the Impression made on the Seat of Thought by the irresistible Charms of Poetry affects the Manners, there can scarcely be a greater Evil in a Community than a shameless and abandoned Poet who becomes popular: Bishop *Burnet* therefore justly calls *DRYDEN* a *Monster of Impurity*; and I will venture to affirm that almost all that he wrote before he was Sixty Years of Age merited the Flames more than Applause, and as much for their poetical Imperfections as for their Want of Purity of Manners: he was, in some Degree, sensible of this Charge; and he expresses his Concern for it in the Preface to his *Fables*; which, with some other of his later poetical Translations, deserve the Reputation which they have gained.

As my Design in these Discourses is to remove the bad Taste of poetical Compositions which prevails among too many, and to help the Judgement of those who need such Assistances, I shall without Reserve deliver my Sentiments on Men and Writings; nor shall I pay any Regard to Custom or prevalent Opinions, when Custom and such Opinions are repugnant to Reason, and to that right Taste which I am endeavouring to establish.



Let the bold Adulteress feel

Fall on his odour-scented Brow,

A N

The Weight of the vindictive Steel:

O

All Heav'n will justify the Blow,

D

E

When Honour strikes for injured Kings,

Thus Cato spoke, the great Thellonian Sage,

O N

Who form'd heroic Youth, and turn'd Age.

MARTIAL VIRTUE.

High in Ida's peaceful Shade,

TO THE

See the wanton Trojan lay,

RIGHT HONOURABLE

Sir JOHN LIGONIER.

Waiting Nature's genial Power:

I.



O, says the Centaur to Pelides, go,

Win in thy Flow'r of Youth a fair Renown,

Let all thy Deeds from Honour's Fountain flow,

Then shall immortal Fame thy Labours crown:

Take the Sword which Justice draws;

Men and Gods approve the Cause:

Let

Let the fond presumptuous Boy,
 Who prefer'd the fleeting Joy
 To the rich Pleasure which from Virtue springs,
 Let the bold Adulterer feel,
 Full on his odour-scented Brow,
 The Weight of the vindictive Steel :
 All Heav'n will justify the Blow,
 When injur'd Honour strikes for-injur'd Kings.
 Thus *Chiron* spoke, the great *Thessalian* Sage,
 Who form'd heroic Youth, and tutor'd Age.

II.

High in *Ida's* peaceful Shade,
 See the wanton *Trojan* lay'd,
 While the gentle *Spartan* Dame
 With her Kisses fans his Flame :
 Joys they taste not, but devour,
 Wasting Nature's genial Pow'r :
 Tho' *Venus* smiles to see them sped,
 Chast *Juno* will not bless the Bed.
 A-while the thoughtless Lovers sleep
 Their weary'd, panting, Limbs in Sleep,
 While the Sun gilds the *Trojan* Wall,
 Devoted by their Crimes to fall.

III.

III.
 Soon the rude Clash of Arms invades their Ears,
 The Trumpet wakes them from their Dreams of Bliss,
 Now Horror, and Remorse, and Doubts, and Fears,
 Drive from their trembling Lips the balmy Kifs:

Now no more the fragrant Bow'r,
 Deck'd with ev'ry vernal Flow'r,
 Calls the Pair to Love's Repast,
 Too ecstatic all to last.
 The angry Brow of Heav'n's deform'd with Clouds:
 Down ev'ry Side of *Ida's* Hill
 Roaring the rapid Torrent rows,
 While terror-bearing Thunders fill
 With Anguish their affrighted Souls,
 And curling Smoke proud *Ilion's* Glory shrouds:
 All *Greece* reveng'd, while Heav'n approv'd their Cause,
 The impious Breach of hospitable Laws.

IV.

All in vain the royal Fair,
 Giving to the Winds her Hair,
 Full and frantic with the God,
 Saw the *Phrygian* Turrets nod,
 All in vain, with streaming Eyes,
 Utter'd these prophetic Cries:
Troy is no more, her Empire falls;
 And *Paris, Paris*, shakes her Walls!

Troy is no more! Old *Priam* bleeds!
 And *Paris* does the murd'rous Deeds;
Troy is no more, her Fate's at Hand;
 And *Paris* is the burning Brand!

V.

Now turn, O! Muse, the bold *Pindaric* Song
 To *Ligonier*, for he deserves it well;
 Well has he serv'd thy Sister *Pallas* long;
 And long he shall adorn the martial Shell.
*Hiero**, of antient Worth,
 Gave to Lays divine their Birth,
 Tho the Dread of punic Pow'r,
 Gentle in the peaceful Hour:
 Mild is thy Soldier as the Breez of *May*;
 But, if the brazen Tongue of War
 Commands him to th' embattel'd Plain,
 He mounts with Joy the warlike Car,
 Or guides th' impatient Courser's Rein,
 Where Victory, or Death, must close the Day:
 Reward him, O! reward him with Renown;
 Be his the mural, his the civic, Crown!

VI.

While the Youth of *British* Race,
 Scorn of *Britain* and Disgrace,
 Revel'd

* The Character of *Hiero* may be seen in the twenty-third Book of *Justin's* History, and in the first olympic Ode of *Pindar*.

Revel'd out their peaceful Hours
 In their soft polluted Bow'rs,
 Drowning ev'ry Sense of Soul
 In the dithyrambic Bowl,
 The gallant Chief, bright Son of Fame,
 Purchas'd in Fields of Blood a Name,
 A Name that shall my Song adorn,
 Example to an Age unborn :
 Princes may Rank and Titles give ;
 But 'tis the Muse must bid him live.

VII.

Sweet the Remembrance of heroic Deeds,
 And beauteous as the Landships of the Spring !
 Graceful the Files of War, when Virtue leads
 Against the Pow'rs of a tyrannic King !
 Rapid Swiftneſs to purſue,
 Strength to draw the twanging Yew,
 Skill to aim the flying Dart,
 Fierceneſs of a Lion's Heart,
 Can win no Praise, unleſs their Ends are good :
 Who will decree the laurel Crown
 Or to the Tyger, or the Bear,
 Who to the Leopard give Renown,
 Becauſe the ſavage Warriors dare
 Lay waſte the quiet Empire of the Wood ?
 Unprais'd behold the watry Deluge run ;
 Unprais'd alike be *Philip's* frantic Son !

BOOK VIII. The Bloud

Monuments of endless Praise, not least in

Clio rais'd, and still shall raise, growing

To the Chiefs of mighty Name, who still

live Inheritors of Fame, who still shall live

Thus, by her eternal Laws, who still shall live

Live her *Churchill* and *Nassau*.

This Gift, O! *Ligonier*, receive, who still shall live

A Garland which the Muses weave, who still shall live

Not of the fading Verdure made, who still shall live

Which grows in *Chiswick's* * awful Shade,

But of immortal Blossoms wove

From *Pindus* and the *Aonian* Grove.

The Garden of the Earl of Burlington.

THE END.



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